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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001708

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF DAS YAMAMOTO AND AF/E  
DJIBOUTI FOR A/S DR. FRAZER  
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: SAMORA REITERATES GOE POLICY ON SOMALIA  
TO GENERAL ABIZAID

REF: IIR 6 830 0174 06

Classified By: CHARGE VICKI HUDDLESTON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary. LTG Samora Yonus, Chief of General Staff, Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) met with Commander, U.S. Central Command General John Abizaid and the Charge June

¶19. Topics of discussion included CJTF-HOA presence in Ethiopia, the Somalia situation, Ethiopian military intentions, and the Ethiopia/Eritrea border situation. Yonus said Ethiopia will not accept an attack on the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and if Ethiopia intervenes it will only be to do "good" to break the momentum of the United Islamic Courts (UIC). He added that CJTF-HOA must leave the Ogaden until the ENDF destroys the ONLF. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Samora reiterated his previously stated position that Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) troops must depart the Ogaden. He said there is nothing to coordinate as the ENDF does not do civil affairs and humanitarian assistance projects. He likes the fact the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) does not attack U.S. forces. However, the last thing he wants is for the ONLF or al ittiihad al islamiya (AIAI) to kill an American in the Ogaden. He said CJTF-HOA forces could return once the ENDF clears the ONLF and AIAI in three to four months time. The ONLF and AIAI are destabilizing the region. Samora said the ENDF is having success in its operations. He said the situation in the Ogaden is more delicate now because of the situation in Somalia. Samora said Bilate and Hurso training could continue and it was only the U.S. that raised these locations. He added he alone made the decision concerning the Ogaden due operational considerations. Samora would not consider the long term benefit of keeping U.S. personnel in Gode.

¶3. (C) Shifting to the situation in Somalia, Samora began by stating the United Islamic Courts (UIC) are not that big or well organized and uses religion. (DATT comment: The Ethiopian head of military intelligence said the opposite that the UIC is well organized with a command and control structure see IIR 6 830 0175 06 Ethiopian intelligence head views on the United Islamic Courts. End Comment.) He said they are not comprised of regular soldiers and clerics comprise the main force. When pressed several times Samora never gave a precise number of UIC fighters. He added warlord Ganyare is selling his arms and ammunition and the funds are deposited in banks in Djibouti.

¶4. (C) Samora said the Ethiopia has directed the UIC to pull back from Beledweyne. If they do not pull back the ENDF will go in and attack. He noted only 70 UIC fighters took over Beledweyne without a fight. Samora said the ONLF and AIAI use this area to stage their movements into Ethiopia. He added about 640 ONLF and AIAI fighters, the last of the group training in Eritrea, recently arrived in an area outside of Beledweyne.

¶5. (C) Samora said Ethiopia would not accept an attack on the TFG, referring to Baidoa. He said the UIC does not accept the TFG. He stressed the ENDF had not entered Somalia, but is following the situation seriously. The ENDF continues its preparations and planning for a mission in Somalia. He said attacking in Somalia makes the ENDF Ogaden operations easier. (DATT comment: This would allow the ENDF to eliminate the training and logistics bases the ONLF and AIAI have in Somalia. End Comment.)

¶6. (C) Samora said the UIC does not have big armaments. They have technicals and perhaps a few armored personnel carriers (APCS). He said they get their funding from Arab countries and weapons and ammunition from Yemen. He said the ENDF knows exactly where the UIC are. He added Ethiopia knows the location of the Eritrean officer who is the coordinating commander.

¶7. (C) Samora said Ethiopia has two objectives if it intervenes in Somalia -- national security and the more difficult and complex mission per the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) decision to protect and defend the TFG. He added the TFG has little military capability and its number of effective fighters fluctuates.

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¶8. (C) Samora responded to a question concerning any requirements the ENDF might have for operations in Somalia. He said the ENDF did not need much more equipment. It would need infantry and helicopters. It would keep its forces on the border. The ENDF over the weekend moved three companies of aghazi commandos to Ferfer and Geladi. He said the U.S. and Ethiopia need to work to coordinate activities, especially concerning peacekeeping forces.

¶9. (C) Samora said there are foreign fighters in Mogadishu, but not on the front line with the UIC.

¶10. (C) The chief of general staff is not worried that ENDF inside Somalia would strengthen the UIC. He said it would not strengthen the UIC but it would strengthen the TFG.

¶11. (C) Samora responded to the question concerning the Ethiopia/Eritrea border situation. He said it was okay with no change in attitude and the issue remains. He said Eritrea's capability to start a war is changing. He added the rainy season in Eritrea has made the rivers full and that this would be a concern in September. He noted Eritrea wants instability in Ethiopia, hence its training and organizing of various Ethiopian opposition forces. He said Eritrea wants a weak Ethiopia. Samora said the ENDF would not pull forces off the northern front to support its operations in Somalia. He noted that while Ethiopia fought Eritrea previously it had forces in Baidoa. (DATT Comment: He made this point again on 20 June when DATT spoke alone with Samora. End Comment.)

¶12. (c) On 20 June 2006 DATT had an impromptu ten minute meeting with Samora. Samora believed the meeting on 19 June with General Abizaid been confrontational. DATT said it was a good meeting and Abizaid understood Samora's position, though there were some differences. He asked how the meeting with Prime Minister Meles had gone. Samora then expressed his personnel view that U.S. policy supporting the warlords had failed. He criticized the U.S. for not consulting with Ethiopia before embarking on this path. He questioned U.S. intentions in Somalia and whether or not senior policy

understood Eritrea's role in the current situation.

¶13. (c) Samora criticized the U.S. for not supporting the TFG, especially after IGAD had decided to support it. He said the U.S. did not support the IGAD decision to send peacekeepers to Somalia. The first force would have consisted of Kenyans, Ethiopians, Djiboutian, Sudanese and Ugandans. He added that even after IGAD modified the force, removing the front line states, to consist only of Sudanese and Ugandans, the U.S. would not support the plan. He stressed the importance of U.S. working together with Ethiopia to resolve the current problem.

HUDDLESTON